





Gen Muhlenberg

Engraved for the Democratic Review by J.B. Forrest from a picture by J. Neagle

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF THE LATE

HENRY A. MUHLENBERG.

For the unbroken period of one hundred years, the name of MUHLENBERG has been associated with the national developments in Religion, Letters, Politics and Arms; and during all that period has been upheld by a succession of Democratic men, equally distinguished for their private as for their public virtues. It is a pious duty to rescue the fast perishing memories of the good and true men, to whose labors in all that constitutes the real glory of a State, the Republic owes so much. The bright example of their patriotism, of their self-denial, of their pure devotion to principle, is part of the great legacy of the past to the future. It was the pride as it was the policy of Rome, to hand down from age to age the story of the early fathers, to render their names and deeds familiar as household words, in order that the ever present memory of their stern virtues might penetrate the souls of the Roman youth, and fill them with the spirit of emulation.

The melancholy event, that has so lately bereaved the Democracy of Pennsylvania, presents an appropriate occasion for offering to the readers of this Magazine a sketch, however slight and unworthy, of some members of a family, the history of which is most intimately

blended with that of the party, to whose interests these pages are devoted.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, from whom is descended all of the name in the United States, was born at Eimleck in Saxony, in the year 1711. The early death of his father, who exercised some judicial functions upon which the support of his family depended, arrested the education of the boy, and at a very tender age cast him upon the resources of his own industry for subsistence. In the school of domestic adversity and affliction was formed that apostolic character of courageous energy combined with lowly humility, of patience under suffering, and of hopeful perseverance, that so greatly distinguished his after life. The deep-toned piety of the poor orphan, and his love for learning which poverty could not repress, attracted to him friends, whose generous assistance enabled him to pursue the path their wise counsels pointed out. Always, however, self-relying and self-sustained, he did not permit himself to eat the bread of charity, but by imparting instruction to others honorably obtained the means of instruction for himself. At Göttingen his merits as a scholar drew the marked attention of Gesner; whilst his active practical piety, devot-

ing itself to the spiritual illumination of the darkest and most neglected portions of society, procured him the blessings of the poor, and the grateful notice of the authorities of the University. It was here that he originated a society among the Theological Students, for the reclamation of those wretched children, the vices and crimes of whose parents doom them to the heritage of ignorance and immorality. From Göttingen, where his reputation as a scholar and his amiable and benevolent disposition had raised him powerful friends, he removed, under the auspices of the Count Reuss, whose chaplain he was, and of the Count Heukel, to Halle. There, as at Göttingen, he was constantly engaged in the abodes of misery, in the Hospital and in the Orphan House, ministering to the souls of the sick and the afflicted, or giving instructions to the poor. The friendly and intimate relations that he formed at Halle, with some of the most eminent men of that University, with Franke, with Cellarius, and with the Inspector Fabricius, were never interrupted during their lives, but continued to cheer and encourage him in the arduous mission, to which their confidence invited and promoted him. At the earnest solicitation of those friends, he accepted, in the year 1741, the appointment of Missionary to the German Lutherans of Pennsylvania. What personal sacrifices he made in leaving Europe, in abandoning the direct pursuit of learning and the career of distinction opened to him in the church and in the Universities of his fatherland, he esteemed as nothing compared with the duty of accepting this appointment.

The field of his labors was then one vast wilderness, in which, rude and unreclaimed as was the face of nature, it was not more wild and desolate than that portion of its inhabitants who constituted his particular charge. The emigration from Germany to the British Colonies, but more especially to Pennsylvania, increasing annually from its beginning in the latter part of the seventeenth century, had, previous to 1741, become very great. Many thousands of the Pennsylvania colonists, scattered sparsely over a vast extent of country, were German Lutherans. Among all this people there was not at that time one altar or one priest consecrated to

the service of God. Here and there some outcast, whose life was a reproach to his profession, assumed the office of the Ministry but to bring Religion into further disrepute. A generation had grown up, native of the soil, among which the duties and the observances of Religion were unknown. In fact that devotional spirit, one of the finest characteristics of the German race, was well nigh extinguished among this German people.

Such was the field upon which the missionary, ardent and zealous in his calling, entered a solitary laborer. The work before him he stopped not to measure, but began it at once. Of his toilsome progress, of his triumphs over every obstacle, this is not the place to speak. With what success he cried in the wilderness, let those venerable churches, the just pride of the Lutherans, monuments of his efficient zeal, founded by his hand, declare. And when, years after his arrival, there came to his assistance other missionaries, with what astonishment did they behold the results of his labors. The church which he planted like a mustard seed, had become a tree under whose wide spreading branches were gathered the lost and scattered sheep of his fold.

At this distance of time and in the present improved condition of the country, it is not easy to appreciate the toils and perils of a life passed as was that of this devoted man. The discharge of his ordinary duties among his remote congregations must have been oppressive, but they were light compared with his duties to the church at large. From New York to Georgia, wherever there arose a difficulty, his fatherly presence and counsels were invoked, and never were withheld. No consideration of the personal inconvenience of those then dangerous and difficult journeys ever held him back.

The education of Dr. Muhlenberg qualified him, in an especial manner, to be the head and founder of the American Mission. He preached in all the languages in which the doctrines of the German Reformation were taught. In New York he frequently held forth in three languages on the same Sabbath. Besides a profound acquaintance with theology, he was well versed in other departments of science. In medicine and surgery his aid was sought exten-

sively ; indeed, he practised them for the benefit of the poor. To these were added most of those polite accomplishments which serve to embellish the learning of the scholar, and to render him the delight and ornament of society. But great as were his qualifications in these respects, he was endowed with others of far more immediate importance to the success of his labors. To a disposition the most kind and gentle were united a firmness and integrity of purpose that could not be shaken. His knowledge of the human heart, deceitful as it is, was such that he was said "to read the character of men as in an open book ;" and to this quickness of perception, perhaps more than to any other gift, he owed his extraordinary powers as a teacher. His manner of speaking, adapting itself to the nature of his audience, was such as could equally rivet the attention of a Synod or of the rude congregations of the frontier : he could appeal with equal force and effect to the head and to the heart of man. With all these rich endowments of Nature and of Art, he was a meek, lowly and humble Christian, whose daily walk and conversation nobly illustrated the purity and sincerity of his teachings. To the poor, the weak, the friendless, the fatherless, he was a refuge : his charity was free as the liberal air—his good counsels open to all who sought them.

For forty-five years this venerated man labored in accomplishing the purposes of his mission. He had lived to see that church which he alone planted grow into honor and usefulness : its numerous clergy distinguished for learning and piety—its laity for all the virtues that appertain to the true Christian character. He had exhorted and encouraged the people of his charge to stand by their country in the darkest hours of the Revolution, and had given to them, in his sons, examples of patriotism worthy of their admiration and imitation. At length, covered with years and honors, on the 7th of October, 1787, this apostle of the Germans in America went down to the grave, mourned by his country as a patriot, by the church as its father and its founder.

The three sons he left behind him were worthy of his name and fame, and had already verified to him the promise of blessings upon the seed of the righteous.

Of these sons the eldest was Peter who was born on the 1st of October, 1746, at the Trappe, in Montgomery county, Pennsylvania. When he had attained the age of sixteen, he was sent with his two younger brothers, Frederick Augustus and Henry Ernestus, to Halle for the purpose of education. The discipline of the school being too severe for his habits, he took occasion to run away, and, it is said, enlisted himself in some German regiment, from which he was with difficulty extricated by a British officer, who recognized the young soldier as an old American acquaintance, obtained his discharge, and brought him back to America as his secretary. Returned home, his father directed his education, and having prepared him for the ministry of the Swedish Lutheran church, which requires Episcopal ordination, he went out to England in 1772 with the late Bishop White, then also a candidate for holy orders, and they were ordained together in the priesthood by the Bishops of London and Ely.

Upon his return to America, after a short engagement in New Jersey, he fixed his residence in Virginia, in charge of several parishes in Dunmore county. The differences between the colonies and the mother country had already assumed a serious aspect. Men were taking sides. The lines between the friends of the country and of the crown were drawn. His clerical brethren were for the most part tories—he and a few others ardent and active whigs. The political and personal hostilities of the tories towards him but inflamed his zeal. He was sent as a delegate from his county to the House of Burgesses. The Revolution broke out. Washington, who knew his worth, urged him to take a military command, and the Eighth Virginia Regiment being tendered to him, he accepted it. Ascending his pulpit for the last time, he preached upon the duties men owe to their country : in the course of his sermon he told his hearers that "there was a time for all things—a time to preach and a time to fight—and that now was the time to fight." After the services were concluded, he laid aside his gown in the pulpit, and appearing in full uniform, read his commission as colonel, and ordered the drummers at the door to beat up for recruits. He had no difficulty in forming his regiment—his parishioners crowded to its standard

in great numbers. As soon as it was formed, he was ordered to march for the protection of Charleston. His first campaigns were served in Georgia and South Carolina. Those campaigns were severe schools of untried military merit ; but at the battle of Sullivan's Island he justified the good opinion of Washington, and during their subsequent progress, established a high character for conduct and valor. Devoted to the comfort and welfare of his soldiers, seeking for himself no exemption from their privations, never forgetting that those whom he commanded were men and brethren, he inspired among them a deep feeling of attachment to his person, and of cheerful obedience to his commands. An officer can have no higher testimonial of his merits than the love of a disciplined soldiery.

Being promoted on the 21st of Feb., 1777, to the rank of Brigadier General, he was ordered to the North, and took an active part in the campaign of that year in Pennsylvania. At the battle of Brandywine on the 11th of September, his and Weedon's brigade sustained the brunt of the action, after the fortune of the day had declared against our arms. On the 8th of October, at the battle of Germantown, his command, having advanced further into the town than any other part of the army, was in the hottest part of the action. Upon the retreat he covered the left wing. On this occasion he was under the necessity of shooting a British officer with his own hand. The officer had seized a musket and fired at him once, and was in the act of reloading it and giving personal directions "to pick him off," when the General, drawing a pistol, shot him dead upon the spot.

In the campaign of 1778, General Muhlenberg was at the battle of Monmouth. He commanded the reserve at the storming of Stony Point in '79. When Leslie invaded Virginia in 1780 he was opposed to him with the chief command. Upon the after movement on the same State by Benedict Arnold and Philips, he acted under the Baron Steuben, and when Cornwallis entered Virginia he was next in command to Lafayette. During this last campaign, by his prompt action, though without orders, at the battle of Green Spring, he rescued the Pennsylvania Line from impending destruction.

Services like these, rendered over al-

most every part of the wide field of the Revolutionary contest, and during the whole time of its continuance, were fitly terminated at the Siege of Yorktown. In that siege he commanded the first brigade of Light Infantry, to which belongs the glory of furnishing the American division of the troops that carried the British redoubts by assault. The surrender at Yorktown virtually ended the struggle. He, however, continued in the army until it was disbanded ; and received, in the last promotion, the commission of a Major General—an honor well earned on many a hard fought field, the highest with which his country could testify her sense of his military services.

Upon his return to civic life, he took up his abode in Pennsylvania, and was immediately elected a member of the Supreme Executive council of that State. In 1785, he was chosen Vice President of the Commonwealth, Dr. Franklin at the same time being chosen President. To this office he was re-elected the two following years. Upon the adoption of the Federal constitution he was elected, the vote being then by general ticket, to the first Congress of the United States. Of that body he was an active and useful member, always to be found at his post, and distinguished for his resistance of every measure that in his judgment was of an anti-republican tendency. He was also a member of the third and sixth Congresses.

During the period of General Muhlenberg's congressional service, the political parties were developed, which have ever since, under whatever change of name, agitated the country. In that day they were known as Federal and Republican, and then, perhaps more than at any subsequent time, did party spirit run highest. As a leader of the Republican party in Pennsylvania, General Muhlenberg took an early and decided stand. He was not a man to flinch from the responsibilities of his party position ; and bringing to it, as he did, great weight of character and of personal popularity, his influence in building up and sustaining the ascendancy of his party was felt and freely acknowledged. In 1799, as in 1844, the Gubernatorial election in Pennsylvania was made the battle ground of the approaching Presidential contest. It is matter of history what means were re-

sorted to in order to overawe the Republicans of that State upon that occasion. The part that General Muhlenberg then took was admitted at the time to have mainly contributed to the success of the Republican candidate, Thomas McKean. The result in Pennsylvania saved the Republican party.

In the electoral college of '97 he voted for Jefferson for the Presidency, and afterwards, in 1801, as a member of the House of Representatives, when the election of President came into that body, he voted for him on every one of the thirty-six ballottings that were held.

In 1801, he was elected to the United States Senate, his seat in which he resigned in the summer of that year. In the following winter, Jefferson appointed him Supervisor of the Revenue for the District of Pennsylvania—and in 1803, Collector of the Port of Philadelphia, which office he held at the time of his death, on the 1st of October, 1807.

Gen. Muhlenberg was one of those characters which in revolutions always find their level. He was by nature a soldier. The frolic incident of his youth indicated the turn of his mind. He entered the church, doubtless with as sincere and honest purposes as any of her ministry, but the agony of his country called him from the altar with a voice that touched every chord of his soul. The time for fighting had come—the time to try men's souls. His whole heart was with his country; rebellion against tyrants was obedience to God—and so feeling and so thinking he went forth from the Temple to the Field.

He was brave and generous to a fault—a proper Brigadier to Wayne and Greene, *who loved him*. Cool in danger, sound in judgment, indifferent to fame, zealous in duty—these were his distinguishing traits as a soldier. His virtues in private and in political life were all cognate to these.

The second son of Dr. Muhlenberg, Frederick Augustus, was born at the Trappe on the 2d of June, 1750. He remained at the University of Halle some years after his brother Peter had left, and acquired a very finished education. His father's wishes and his own inclination coinciding, he followed the theological course of that celebrated school, and was ordained in the ministry of the Lutheran Church in Europe. On his return to America, he took

charge of a remote country congregation, from which he was soon called to a church in the city of New York. His reputation as a preacher was high and well merited. In him were singularly united all the qualities that adorn and dignify the clerical character—piety, education, eloquence, polished manners. His ministry, however, in the midst of its usefulness, was suddenly arrested, soon after the outbreak of the Revolution, by the taking of New York. The ardor of his Whig principles, not less than the activity of his whole family, rendered his name obnoxious to the British, and imposed upon him the necessity of seeking personal safety by flight from that city. Passing into Pennsylvania, he took up his residence near the place of his birth, and for the following two or three years was in charge of a congregation or assisted his venerable father. The progress of the great contest during this time, though it had reached its lowest depths of gloom and despondency, did not in the least dishearten him. He was full of hope and confidence in the destinies of his country, and bent every energy of his mind to the advancement of her holy cause. So marked was his patriotic devotion, that in 1779 the Legislature of Pennsylvania, to testify their sense of his service, elected him a delegate to the Continental Congress, and in the next year renewed that honorable appointment. Having served those two terms, he became constitutionally ineligible to Congress for the ensuing three years. But the people of Philadelphia county, who had observed his work as a public man in the national councils, not willing to lose his services, immediately sent him to the Legislative body of the State, upon taking his seat in which he was chosen its Speaker. This confidence of the people, and this honor at the hands of their Representatives, he enjoyed for three successive years: the jealous spirit of the constitution of 1776 allowed no more.

By that constitution, which, though framed in the spirit of pure and antique Democracy, was, from its curiously complicated machinery, impracticable as a system of organic law, there was created a supervising power in the State, designated the Council of Censors. This body could meet but once in seven years, but when it met, its au-

thority extended over every department of government, even over the constitution itself. To this council, the only time it was ever convened, Mr. Muhlenberg was elected, and was called, by its unanimous choice, to preside over its deliberations. It consisted of such men as Wayne, and St. Clair, and Bryan, and Smilie, and Finley. It was indeed a body whose members were "noted for wisdom and virtue." The journal of its proceedings presents matter full of interest and instruction to the student of political history. In this council, Mr. Muhlenberg took the lead in favor of calling a convention to revise the constitution, and to his early exertions and able reports the call of the convention of 1790 is largely attributable. That convention, transcending the objects of its original projectors, overthrew not merely the forms but the principles of the Revolutionary constitution. It is, however, a striking illustration of the self-preserving tendency of Democratic institutions, that after a forty-eight years' trial of the constitution of 1790, the people of Pennsylvania have fallen back upon most of the rejected principles of the constitution of 1776.

In 1787, he was elected a delegate to the State Convention, called to consider the Constitution of the United States, and act upon its ratification. He was chosen President of this body, and exerted his influence in favor of adopting the federal constitution.

Being elected a member of the first Congress, that of 1789-91—on the assembling of the House, his long and eminent parliamentary services indicated him as the proper person to be raised to the Speakership. A happier selection could not have been made. The forms of legislation, then about to be settled, required in the first Speaker, all that experience and practical acquaintance with the details of business and the modes of conducting it, which he possessed. The journals of that Congress attest his merits in all these respects. He served in the House of Representatives during the whole of Washington's administration, and had the honor of being called to the Speakership a second time, by the third Congress. In the important legislation of that period, he took a very prominent and useful part. Politically, he was a Republican, and though a party leader, yet he seems to have been above the

control of mere partisan motives and influences. A striking illustration of this characteristic was afforded by him on the occasion when Congress was solicited to pass the laws necessary to carry Jay's Treaty into effect. Whatever may have been the defects of that Treaty, it will not now be denied, that they were at the time grossly exaggerated and distorted, and that the refusal to pass those laws would, in all probability, have involved us in a war at that critical moment of our national existence when we most needed peace. The excitement with regard to the Treaty, within the halls of Congress, was scarcely less intense than that which was agitating the whole people without. A resolution affirming the expediency of passing those laws was before the committee of the whole House, of which Mr. Muhlenberg was Chairman. The question upon reporting the resolution to the House, was taken—some Republicans sustained it—the vote stood even—every eye was fixed upon the Chair—every breath was suspended—hope or fear racked every breast—he voted aye. Death to him—it may be life to his country. From the effects of that vote he never recovered. It destroyed his relations with his constituency for ever. That it was given under an imperious sense of duty and from the most correct motives, was not doubted—his whole life and character forbade a doubt. Though he forfeited the popular favor, he did not lose the confidence of the eminent patriots with whom he had been so intimately associated in Pennsylvania politics. Not long after leaving Congress, he was appointed by Governor Mifflin, Register of the Land Office, in which he was continued by Governor McKean, until his decease in 1802.

The third son of Dr. Muhlenberg, Henry Ernestus, who it has been mentioned went to Europe for his education, with his elder brothers, remained at Halle until he completed his course of studies. Two years after his return, being only nineteen years of age, he became an adjunct of his father in the ministry. He was soon elected the third preacher of the Philadelphia congregations, in charge of which he remained up to the taking of that city by the British. The influence that he had exercised among his people in favor of the Revolution, had been too open and

marked to escape the malignant observation of the Tories. The most atrocious threats had been uttered against him, and as the capture of the city placed his enemies in a position to gratify their malice, it became expedient for him to withdraw. His flight was not without dangers and adventures.

For the several years ensuing, being without a ministerial charge, he devoted himself entirely to scientific pursuits, in the departments of botany and mineralogy. Though every field of nature was more or less explored by him in the course of his life, botany was ever that one in which he delighted most to labor. His extensive correspondence with the most celebrated naturalists in Europe and of America, and with the various foreign learned societies, of which he was a member, reaching through thirty-five years, was in itself a noble contribution to the cause of science. He published several works on botany, the principal of which are entitled *Catalogus Plantarum*, and *Descriptio liberior Graminum*, the latter especially considered an essay of great accuracy and laborious research. Besides these direct contributions, he promoted the interests of science in other efficient ways. He was ever ready with friendly counsel to instruct the youthful votary, to encourage him when his heart failed, and to the extent of his means to assist him in extremities. With the true feeling and spirit, whilst he adored nature as a mother, he loved every one who cultivated her as a brother. In the language of the late Dr. Baldwin—"He was not only worthy of imitation for that most active zeal and industry which characterized him the *Linnæus of our country*, but also for that unbounded liberality of sentiment which he uniformly manifested towards his contemporaries, and which ought ever to distinguish the genuine Christian philosopher and naturalist from the narrow-minded despot in science, who would exalt his own fame even at the expense of those around him."

A man of his particular habits and caste of thought, could not be expected to take an active part in politics; he, however, always manifested a deep interest in the progress of events. A Whig of the Revolution, a Republican of '99, the personal friend and correspondent of Jefferson and other leading

Democrats, he continued through life firm and unshaken in his attachment to the principles of the Democratic party.

From 1780 to the day of his death, in May, 1815, he was in charge of the Lutheran congregation in the city of Lancaster. As a divine he enjoyed the veneration of his people, the highest consideration of his church, the love and confidence of all Christians. Tolerant of others' opinions, decided in his own—indulgent of the follies, stern in his reproof of the vices, of society—inviting intimacy by the childlike simplicity of his manner, repelling rude familiarity with dignity—conversant in all learning, yet the delight alike of the ignorant and learned,—he well illustrated that old school of gentlemen and of scholars which is fast passing away.

Having thus presented these faint sketches of the lives and characters of those from whom the late Henry A. Muhlenberg derived his honored name, it remains to show how worthily he sustained and added to its reputation. In speaking of those long numbered with the dead, the mind addresses itself to the contemplation of their memories with a philosophic calmness not unfavorable to a just and perfect appreciation of their merits. Written under the influence of this state of feeling, the former part of this memoir was an easy and a grateful labor; what follows, weighed down as the heart of the writer is by the recent loss of that dear friend, whose portraiture he is about to attempt, can be no more than a dim outline, seen through a tearful eye, drawn by a faltering hand.

Henry Augustus Muhlenberg, the eldest son of the venerable and learned man, to whom the last brief notice was devoted, was born at Lancaster on the 13th day of May, 1782. His elementary instruction, received immediately under the direction of his father, was of the most thorough and liberal kind. It embraced a wide range of languages and mathematics; and as, for the greater part of its course, he enjoyed the peculiar advantage of private tuition, his progress was much in advance of his years. That he never entered a college was owing to the fact, that before the period of life at which young men ordinarily are sent to such an institution, he had completed the usual collegiate studies.

Brought up in a family so essentially

Republican as was his, and enjoying the unbounded affection of his uncle, General Muhlenberg, with whom his relations were like those of a son, it was natural, particularly in high party times, that he should, in early boyhood, adopt the political principles of those he loved and revered. Accordingly, during the extraordinary scenes that ensued on the passage of the Sedition Law, when the Germans of Pennsylvania were so sorely tried, he was found with all the ardor and activity of youth, throwing himself into the contest. Even then, but sixteen years old, writing in defence of McKean and Jefferson, his pen gave promise of the potent influence it was in his after-life to wield over the German mind of his native State.

Having attained an age when his reason could give its deliberate assent to the wishes of his father, he was sent to New York to enter upon the study of theology, under the auspices of his uncle, the Rev. Dr. Kunze, a divine eminent for his profound learning and exemplary piety. The devoted zeal which he exhibited in preparing himself for the ministry, inspired the highest expectations of his friends and of the church. These expectations were fully realized in his subsequent career. In 1802, having been licensed as a candidate of the ministerium, he accepted the charge of the congregation in Reading. The connection there formed, continued a union of uninterrupted harmony between the pastor and people for twenty-seven years. How well and how acceptably he discharged the duties of the ministerial office, is best known to those thousands of living witnesses whose hearts he filled with the knowledge and the love of God, and whose regard for his memory is as tender as that of children for a parent.

Great as was the love of his congregation, it was equalled by the honor and esteem in which he was held by his clerical brethren. By these he was at different times called to fill the secretaryship and treasurer'ship of the Synod, and finally, by their unanimous suffrage, was raised to the presidency of that highest council of the church, in which he was continued, by successive re-elections, as long as the constitution would permit. In the councils of his church, his character for integrity and moderation gave him a just and prominent influence. With an energy equal

to any emergency, still was he ever the friend of peace and conciliation, by the exercise of whose gentle arts he well understood how to allay discord and dissension. In seasons of difficulty, the advice of no one was listened to with more submission, or acted upon with greater confidence—a confidence often justified by salutary results.

As a pulpit orator, it has been said by enlightened and competent judges, that Mr. Muhlenberg was the subject of general and deserved admiration. Indeed the many invitations that he received from the churches of the large cities, would indicate his contemporary reputation in this respect. The favorable judgment of the people was confirmed by the severer criticism of the ministry—his eloquence was alike acceptable to both. A commanding presence, a deep sonorous voice, a manner earnest but graceful, prepossessed the senses of his hearers. His mastery of all the rich resources of the German languages, his evidently intense interest in his subject, the copious learning with which he informed the mind, the glowing warmth with which he touched the heart, achieved the rest. Always instructive, he was never merely didactic. His power over the feelings was never exercised in such a way that the judgment could not sanction the emotions excited.

Towards the year 1827, the health of Mr. Muhlenberg becoming impaired by the sedentary nature of his pursuits, he expressed a determination to withdraw from the charge of his congregation, and retire upon a farm. This resolution was no sooner made known than the attention of the Democracy of old Berks was directed to him as a man in every way qualified to represent the district in Congress. His quiet and consistent support of Democratic measures, had been observed for more than a quarter of a century, his honesty and capacity were known to all. Pressed by numerous friends, he at last yielded to the wishes of the people, and in the following year was elected a representative to the Twenty-First Congress. In June, 1829, in a letter addressed to the Synod, every line of which shows how sadly he took the step, he resigned his ministerial office. The resolution of the Synod upon the occasion, bore ample testimony to the regard in which Mr. Muhlenberg was held by that body,

and bade him an affectionate God-speed in his new career.

He entered public life, perhaps, under the only circumstances that could have drawn him forth. To have toiled up through the devious and crooked paths of the lower politics would have been revolting to his manly and ingenuous nature. The petty intrigues and paltry arts, by which unworthy ambition daily rises to place and power, were abhorrent to his soul. It would have disdained an elevation purchased by self-abasement. If he could not have taken his seat in the councils of the nation, uncontaminated by the servile labors of which that exalted station is too frequently the object or the reward, he had never sat there.

The Congress to which he was elected, was filled with the earnest and determined spirits whom the recent revolution in the politics of the country had called into action. The Democratic party, rent by the growth of factions, and long sunk into inactivity by the non-resistance of its ancient enemy, required, and had found a leader, whose popularity overwhelming all rivals, would restore to the party its unity, and whose iron nerve would not shrink from drawing anew the almost forgotten lines. In the indolence of undisputed sway, the party had proved faithless to its mission. The time of its regeneration had come. The leader of the new movement was Andrew Jackson. No timid time-server, no man of doubts and fears, was in his proper sphere under such a chief, or in such a Congress. The hour was at hand which required hearts as brave, and heads as cool, as the exigencies of desperate times had ever yet demanded. In that Congress, Mr. Muhlenberg was, at an early day, regarded as amongst the sternest and most inflexible of Democrats; a man wise in council, resolved in action. If he was inexperienced in the forms of legislation, he understood thoroughly its objects, and, as he came to act upon these, applying to them always the severest tests of principle, and throwing himself boldly upon whatever ground was that of right, regardless of expediency, he established in the first session a position in the House, and an influence in the party, which few men attain in many years of service. A character like this could not fail of attracting the respect and confidence of General Jackson. In

the arduous work before him, the President needed friends, high-souled and generous, upon whose honesty, energy, and courage he could rely in whatever extremity, and in Mr. Muhlenberg found one in whom his highest trust was never misplaced.

An occasion upon which Mr. Muhlenberg signally displayed the fearless independence of his character, and his sagacity as a politician, was his opposition to the appropriation for the Maysville Road. That appropriation involved the question of National Internal Improvements. Opinion in Pennsylvania was at the time settled in favor of the so-called American System, of which a gigantic scheme of Canals and Roads, a High Tariff and a National Bank, constituted the parts. The delegation from Pennsylvania, with but two exceptions, voted for the appropriation: Mr. Muhlenberg and his colleague, Mr. Frey, against it. Not only did he vote against it, he stood side by side with James K. Polk, and those true-hearted men stood almost alone, in resisting the fatal measure in debate. In a speech replete with clear and sound views, he exposed the wide-spread corruption, the enormous national debt, the necessity for an onerous tariff, to which the appropriation asked for was but the initiatory step. The voice of warning was raised in vain. The combination of local interests, having many similar projects in reserve, triumphed. The bill passed. The Veto by which it was arrested, taking the same grounds of objection that had been urged in the House, was, after a severe struggle, sustained by Congress, and approved by the country. The fate that has since overtaken many of the States, would unquestionably, but for the defeat of this bill, have fallen upon the nation.

On the Tariff question, the opinions of Mr. Muhlenberg, whilst decided, were moderate. He considered permanency in the system as of more importance than the amount of protection. In a speech that he delivered in opposition to the Compromise Act, he advocated the adjustment of duties so as to furnish revenue for an economical administration of government, with incidental protection to such interests as are truly national. Upon this basis alone can a tariff ever rest undisturbed.

When the Bank of the United States arrayed itself against the administration,

and produced those extraordinary convulsions in the business of the country, by which it sought to coerce Congress through the sufferings of the people, to grant a renewal of its charter, Mr. Muhlenberg stood fast and firm in his hostility to the institution. Through all the stages of that memorable conflict, he never for a moment wavered: others might give way to their fears, produced by the terrors around them, he was made of sterner stuff. He was, during those portentous times, in the emphatic words of a distinguished senator, a pillar of strength in support of the administration. It was he, who, on the 18th of February, 1834, when the country had been agitated for more than two months by the daily appeals of the friends of the bank, moved the previous question, and, by its decisive operation, finished a contest, held too long in doubt.*

Mr. Muhlenberg occupied his seat in Congress for nine years, with credit to himself, and honor to his constituency. In that time he maintained a character for integrity of action and purity of motive, which never was questioned. No one enjoyed in a higher degree that confidence of the House, which is the reward of diligent and upright discharge of duty. As chairman of the standing committee on Revolutionary claims, in which he was indefatigable in his efforts to obtain justice for the old soldiers, he had only to say a bill was just to insure its passage. His ability for public affairs was rather substantial than showy. The observation and study of a life had stored his mind with knowledge. He was patient in investigation, and possessed a judgment of uncommon clearness and quickness of perception. He was not a frequent speaker; questions only of the gravest import drew him out. When he did speak, however, he was always listened to with the most marked attention, and to whatever subject he addressed himself, took an enlarged and comprehensive view of its more important features. His speeches were concise, forcible, and direct; not studied and elaborated by rules of art, but thrown off as occa-

sion seemed to require the effort, the productions of matured reflection and earnest conviction. In truth, German had been for so many years the language of his profession, and of his social intercourse, that he felt an embarrassment in the formal use of English, of which he never could entirely divest himself, though nothing in his diction or accent implied his German origin and education.

As for his public, so he was much esteemed for his private qualities. A party man of inflexible constancy, acting in times of intense political excitement, he, nevertheless, by his generosity, frankness, and kindliness of disposition, commanded the general friendship of his fellow members. It was an effort in which he never relaxed his exertions, to soften the asperities of politics by the cultivation of the refining charities and courtesies of life.

In the year 1835, Mr. Muhlenberg permitted his friends to use his name as a candidate for the governorship of Pennsylvania. The excellent man, who then filled that office, had been an incumbent of it for two terms, a period which the later practice of the Democracy, since the days of Snyder, had fixed as the limit of service, and which subsequently to 1835 has received a constitutional sanction. Much warmth and excitement were elicited during the progress of the canvass, and when at length the convention which was to make a nomination met at Harrisburg, it was soon found that the eager strife of interest and passion would render its deliberations nugatory. The convention, being unable to make a nomination, finally came to a vote dissolving itself, and recommending the assembling of another convention at Lewistown. On the day after this dissolution, that portion of the convention which had been friendly to Governor Wolf, nominated him, and his friends afterwards declining to take part in the election of delegates to meet at Lewistown, a full convention met at that place, and placed Mr. Muhlenberg also before the people. The candidates thus presented were in the

* In a letter of 9th May, 1834, which was made public at the time, Mr. Buchanan says:—"I have more than once heard General Jackson himself speak in the strongest terms of the support which he had received throughout this conflict from *General Muhlenberg*, as he always called him; and when, on one occasion, I told him that Mr. Muhlenberg was no General, his reply was—'no matter, he ought to have been General.'"

hands of their friends. The fatal consequences of the division were apparent, and no man more sincerely wished and sought an accommodation of difficulties than did Mr. Muhlenberg. He went as far towards accomplishing that object as propriety or a due regard for the honor of his friends would permit, but without effect. Both candidates submitted their claims to the people, and the election resulted in the choice of Mr. Ritner by a plurality vote. The bad feeling engendered in this contest seemed likely to survive the election, and to produce a permanent schism in the party. With every day the breach was widening. Violent partizans were hurling at each other menace and defiance. Their common defeat, failing to teach them the necessity of union and harmony, filled them with bitterness and hate. In the midst of all this, the Presidential election of 1836 was coming on. One section had its electoral ticket in the field; the other was about to form one. It was not to be hoped that either would give way to the other. Mr. Muhlenberg could not look on this state of things with indifference. He owed too much to the Democracy, and loved it too well to see it fall away into miserable factions without making an honest effort to avert the calamity. Not doubting that his friends had right and justice on their side, he addressed them with the feelings of a patriot, and entreated them to set the example of magnanimity by concurring in support of the ticket already formed. The voice of the man they honored, they cheerfully obeyed; and in the ensuing campaign, both sections, turning their united arms against the common enemy, in the ardor of battle, soon forgot their recent animosities.

When the question of reforming the State Constitution was agitated, Mr. Muhlenberg took very decided ground in favor of the most radical amendments, and that in direct opposition to the inclinations of the people of Berks county upon the subject. The German population, averse to changes, regarded with veneration a system under which they had prospered, and were willing to endure its defects rather than submit the remedy of them to the innovating temper of the times. His zealous advocacy of reform, under these circumstances, is but another illustration of the independence of his character as a public man.

After the inauguration of Mr. Van Bu-

ren, in 1837, he tendered to Mr. Muhlenberg a seat in the cabinet, as Secretary of the Navy, and subsequently the mission to Russia, both of which the state of his affairs at that time compelled him to decline. Upon the creation of the mission to Austria, in 1838, the President selected him, as peculiarly fitted to discharge its duties; and upon his nomination to the Senate, he received the unanimous confirmation of that body. In the latter part of March he sailed for Europe, taking with him his wife and only daughter.

The opening of diplomatic relations with Austria had for its principal object the introduction of American cotton and tobacco into the dominions of that vast empire, from which they have heretofore been excluded. An insuperable difficulty in the way of any negotiation is the fact that tobacco is extensively cultivated in Hungary, and is, besides, a government monopoly. The fixed condition of things in the old, overpopulous, and indebted states of Europe, renders them slow in changing their mercantile policy or in hazarding any experiment. It may be years before our diplomatic agents in this mission succeed; but whenever the correspondence of Mr. M. shall be published, it will be found that he laid the foundation of that success.

Whilst he was abroad, he visited all the more interesting parts of Italy, Germany, and Switzerland. His descriptions of the men and manners of those countries, with which he was wont to delight and instruct his friends, evinced the closest and most accurate observation. Always intent upon the cultivation of letters, he was constantly engaged during his travels in making additions to his fine collection of books—the rich accumulation of the learning and taste of several generations. He remained abroad nearly three years, and was at last recalled at his own request.

On his return home in December, 1840, he had the inexpressible gratification to find that absence had in no wise diminished the affectionate regard in which not merely the Democracy, but the whole people, of Berks county, had been used to hold him. An immense concourse of his fellow citizens awaited his arrival, which they greeted with every mark of lively and tumultuous joy.

Freed from the cares and the distractions of public employment, revered by the people, surrounded by an amiable and accomplished family, of which he was the idolized father, his society courted by the wise and good, his house the centre of elegant and liberal hospitality, he fondly hoped that he had now reached the limit of political service, and that his declining years might claim for him an exemption from farther duty. But it was not so to be. As the time approached for making the gubernatorial nomination of 1844, his name largely attracted the popular consideration. The writer of this well knows with what hesitating reluctance he at last gave way to the instances of his friends, and allowed himself to be regarded as a candidate for the Democratic nomination. His own county—Berks—the well-named “tenth legion of the Democracy,” formally and by her unanimous voice presented him to the state. The public choice was most equally divided between himself and another distinguished and honored citizen. The canvass of their respective friends, though animated beyond example, was, with insignificant and unworthy exceptions, on either side, conducted in a temper of honorable rivalry. On the 6th of March, Mr. Muhlenberg received the nomination. The Democracy responded to it with an enthusiasm that demonstrated their confidence in the chosen chief, and that afforded the most unerring presage of brilliant victory. He entered upon the duties of his eminent position, devoting to them

constant thought and action. Time wore on. Every advancing day but seemed to make him dearer to the people—to bring him nearer to their hopes. Alas! for the vanity of all earthly honor—all human expectation! On the 10th of August, Pennsylvania gazes with admiration on the erect and manly form of her favorite son—before another day has passed she stands, stupefied with grief, bowed down by sorrow, beside that form stretched on its lowly bier.

Ah! what pen shall describe the awe-struck feelings of the people as the sad tidings spread over the land, of which he was so soon to have been the ruler? He, the just—the honest—the true man, fallen! Smitten down at the very head of the host—the banner in his hands!—how slowly would men believe it—how painfully did conviction force itself upon their minds!

Who shall describe the scenes around his lifeless body—the pressing throngs of weeping men—thousands who came to take a last, long, lingering look at one they loved so well? Who describe the solitary visits of decrepid age, of misery and want in every form, that came to drop their scalding tears in secret upon the hand whose bounty they could never know again? In those touching scenes his character was written. Who saw them never can forget them.

The representatives of the Democracy have decreed a tablet to his memory. What hand will venture to furnish its inscription?

J.